

DISCOURAGING DEVIANCE: THE ROLE OF SALES MANAGER EMPOWERMENT

Ronald Jelinek, Providence College, United States
Michael Ahearne, University of Houston, United States

ABSTRACT

While the management literature has examined the nature and scope of various deviant workplace behaviors over the course of the past decade, marketing scholars- and more specifically, sales researchers- have only recently begun to consider the subject. This is surprising given the boundary-spanning nature of professional selling and the fact that business-to-business salespeople are the face of their organizations; their behavior (or *misbehavior*) can seriously affect the ability of their organization to build relationships with customers. Because workplace deviance has been defined as voluntary employee behavior that violates significant organizational norms and, in so doing, threatens the organization and/or its members, deviant sales behaviors can be organizational, interpersonal and frontline in nature. Building from our previously published work in the area, this research examines the effect of several individual salesperson factors (person-organization fit, trait competitiveness and hours worked) on these three forms of deviant salesperson behavior. Using survey data collected from 160 business-to-business salespeople from multiple companies and multiple industries, we empirically test these main effects and examine whether two forms of manager empowerment moderate several of the direct linkages. Findings show that the extent to which managers both express confidence in the ability of the salesperson to perform and the level to which they explain the meaningfulness of the salesperson's work to the salesperson offset several specific direct effects. Our research concludes with an analysis of our findings, a discussion of their managerial implications and suggestions for future scholarly inquiry.